IMPACT

Sustainability Report 2017

UNOPS

Cover photo:
Schoolchildren are among the 10,000 people in Dennery, in the north of Saint Lucia, benefiting from UNOPS work improving water supplies.
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IMPACT

UNOPS
SUSTAINABILITY
REPORT 2017

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

©UNOPS

Grete Faremo
Under-Secretary-General and UNOPS Executive Director

Over 2017, the challenges we faced as a United Nations remained immense.

In many places, peace remains a distant hope. We see growing inequality and unprecedented needs. Issues of starvation, famine and displacement are still at critical levels in many countries. Only through committing ourselves to supporting coordinated efforts that bring about positive change, do we stand a chance of facing up to these challenges.

Within the UN, UNOPS is focused on implementation. As a resource for Member States, the UN family and partners, across both public and private sectors, our services extend from supporting the implementation of Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions, to helping address humanitarian crises, development efforts, and peace and security priorities around the world.

Last year in our annual Sustainability Report, we highlighted our support in response to some of these crises. This work continued into 2017, where, for example, we helped bring more than 600 million tonnes of vital supplies of food and fuel into Yemen.

Rather than updating details on the issues dominating the headlines, in this publication we chose to illustrate the impact of our work by shining a light on some of the other critical initiatives we are supporting.

These include: A private sector partnership that has led to the building of health clinics in Myanmar; bringing micro-grid renewable energy solutions to hundreds of thousands of people across Sierra Leone; helping improve agricultural practices for more than 120,000 people in Paraguay; building and upgrading homes for vulnerable families in Gaza; and our involvement in the largest area-based development programme in Serbia, which is supporting 34 local self-governments, to benefit more than 270,000 people in underserved areas.

In 2017, we also began in earnest to tackle one of our most important institutional challenges to date: that of gender.

We pledge to call on expertise from all sectors of society, to put policies and safeguards in place that work to foment change, not only in our institution, but through the projects we support. You will find a dedicated section in this report highlighting our plans and goals. To reach these targets, we will have to change the way we manage our people, change the way we recruit, and change the way we report, including through the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). In a world beset by challenges, now more than ever, we need a strong commitment to women and girls.

Moving forward, 2018 is also the first year of our new Strategic Plan. While our Plan is new, UNOPS support remains, as ever, field-focused. Many of our operations are in fragile and conflict-affected states – places like Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia and South Sudan.

To conclude, through the Sustainable Development Goals, we have an opportunity to address some of the world's major challenges. We share a sense of urgency and are committed to supporting efforts across the UN family, in line with our mutual goals. We also share a common aim – to do our utmost to ensure the implementation of Agenda 2030.

I firmly believe our strategy and pledge to reach gender parity will improve our contributions, to help people build better lives, and countries achieve peace and sustainable development.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is at the forefront of UNOPS work around the world. We aim to help our partners maximize the positive impact and sustainability of their projects, to better serve communities in need.

We measure our commitment to sustainability through Global Reporting Initiative standards.

Highlights of our key indicators of sustainability are below.

In communities affected by Colombia's civil war, UNOPS engineers pass on skills and knowledge in how to construct and maintain safe and secure homes.
© UNOPS/John Rae

THE JOBS WE CREATE

Our commitment to sustainability is underlined by the jobs we create in the communities where we work.

In 2017, more than 2.1 million days of paid work were created through projects we supported. Of this, women undertook more than 370,000 of these days. The majority of this was related to our work in infrastructure.

By providing employment opportunities to local people, we help support more sustainable outcomes. And by providing an income and training people in important skills, we increase the potential for future employment, as well as the chance that these salaries are spent locally.

BUILDING LOCAL ECONOMIES

One of the strongest ways we help develop local economies is through our expertise in procurement. We encourage local procurement across all of our projects and track these results.

In 2017, more than $540 million worth of procurement activities went to local suppliers. This helped to lessen environmental impact by reducing transportation emissions. In addition, these activities directly supported local businesses, ensuring that we help our partners strengthen local and national capacity within the same communities.

THE KNOWLEDGE WE BRING

We contribute to social sustainability and national capacity by passing on technical skills and experience to the people we work with on the ground.

We take pride in the fact that our expertise is grounded in international best practices.

In 2017, we provided 40,000 days of technical advice to stakeholders across a range of our projects.

OUR CLIMATE

Measuring our impact on the planet is a foundation of sustainability. In 2017, UNOPS operations emitted 16,931 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, the common unit for describing greenhouse gas emissions. In comparison, 14,969 tonnes were reported in 2016. All of UNOPS emissions are offset using certified emission reductions, with Gold Standard certification developed under the United Nations Clean Development Mechanism. UNOPS has been climate neutral since 2012.

UNOPS emissions by source, 2017

Scope 1

- 24.3% On-site fuel combustion
- 20.1% Vehicle fleet
- 1.6% Refrigerants
- 1.2% Chlorofluorocarbons/ hydrochlorofluorocarbons

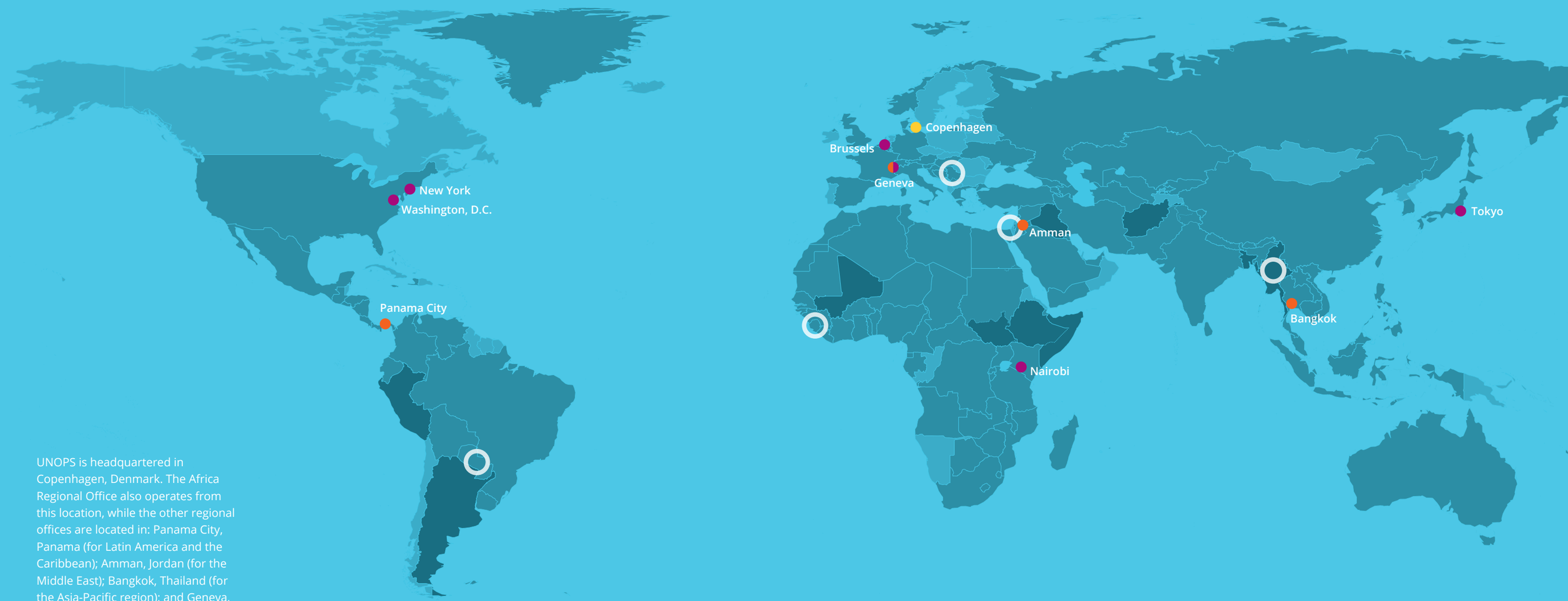
Scope 2

- 12.3% Purchased electricity
- 0.5% Purchased heat/steam

Scope 3

- 38.9% Air travel
- 1.1% Public transport

WHERE WE WORK



UNOPS is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Africa Regional Office also operates from this location, while the other regional offices are located in: Panama City, Panama (for Latin America and the Caribbean); Amman, Jordan (for the Middle East); Bangkok, Thailand (for the Asia-Pacific region); and Geneva, Switzerland (for the European and Central Asian regions).

UNOPS personnel work from country offices and project centres, depending on the scale of the project and UNOPS work within the country. In total, UNOPS personnel are present in more than 80 countries around the world.

UNOPS has liaison offices that help facilitate our global outreach, including in Brussels, Geneva, Nairobi, New York, Tokyo and Washington, D.C.

Lighting up rural Sierra Leone
see page 19

Mobilizing the private sector in Myanmar
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Rebuilding homes in Gaza
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Modernizing family farming across Paraguay
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Sustainable development in Serbia
see page 27

- 2017 countries and territories of delivery
- UNOPS HQ, which includes the Africa Regional Office
- Liaison offices
- Regional offices

Top 10 countries and territories of delivery

- Myanmar
- Argentina
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Mali
- Iraq
- Peru
- Bangladesh
- Afghanistan
- Ethiopia

This map is for illustrative purposes and does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of UNOPS concerning the legal status of any country or territory or concerning the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries.

UNOPS

SECTION II

Our mission is to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development.

Our vision is a world where people can live full lives supported by appropriate, sustainable and resilient infrastructure and by the efficient, transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management.

> UNOPS provides meaningful technical expertise to countries in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
>
> UNOPS technical support to UN agencies in specialized areas has expedited the provision of relief services to millions of people in need, and in doing so, contributed to more stable and secure societies.
>
> **António Guterres, Secretary-General, UN**

HOW WE WORK

We are focused on implementation, committed to UN values and private sector efficiency. We are the only part of the UN not receiving core funding from taxpayers.

Our partners call on us to supplement their own capacities, improve speed, reduce risks, boost cost-effectiveness and increase quality.

We helped train hundreds of community health volunteers in Kenya, in order to reach thousands more. © UNOPS/John Rae

In 2017, UNOPS delivered more than $1.8 billion worth of projects on behalf of our partners.

OUR SERVICES

Each of our service lines have a focus on sustainability and national capacity development. Our financing model promotes lean, effective delivery, while our flexible structure and global reach means that we can quickly respond to partner needs, while gaining the benefits of economies of scale.

We tailor support to the needs of our partners, delivering a key element of a project, offering expert advice, or managing entire projects or programmes. Our main areas of expertise include:

INFRASTRUCTURE

We plan, design, construct and maintain a wide range of sustainable and resilient infrastructure solutions.

From transport, energy, health and education infrastructure, to advising governments on ways to make infrastructure more effective, our experts can help improve the outcomes on investments in infrastructure, for the benefit of local populations and national development.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

We manage projects and programmes of every size, while simultaneously enhancing the capacity of developing countries to manage their own initiatives.

With more than two decades of experience gained through thousands of projects, UNOPS brings the agility and technical expertise needed to get the project done – on cost, on schedule and meeting quality requirements.

PROCUREMENT

Through transparent and effective methods, we specialize in finding new ways to help governments make public procurement more efficient. We are experts in rapid and transparent procurement, whatever the size, scale, product or service you need.

We advise governments to ensure that public procurement reaps benefits for the whole of society. This includes providing solutions to address fraud and corruption, increasing competitiveness and effectiveness.

UNOPS IN NUMBERS

more than
2.1 MILLION
days of paid work were created for beneficiaries; women undertook more than 370,000 of these days' work

more than
$1 BILLION
worth of goods and services were procured for our partners

Some
$540 MILLION
worth of procurement budgets went to local suppliers

243 HEALTH CLINICS & 74 HOSPITALS
constructed, designed, or rehabilitated

2,300 KM
of roads designed, constructed or rehabilitated

35 SCHOOLS
designed, constructed or rehabilitated

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

We have provided trustee and fund management services totalling almost $2 billion on behalf of governments and multilateral institutions since 2010.

Our services include managing grants and pooled funds, and providing advice and oversight for project and programme budgets.

HUMAN RESOURCES

We offer flexible and tailored human resources solutions to UN partners where speed and efficiency are essential.

We provide specialist human resources support in peace and security contexts, during rapidly changing humanitarian emergencies, or for longer-term development, based on the needs of partners.

Nesma, Taj-Eddin and their family now have a new space to call home, thanks to reconstruction efforts in Gaza aimed at providing adequate housing for the most vulnerable. © UNOPS/Elise Laker

HOW WE CONTRIBUTE

UNOPS contributes to broader efforts to help partners realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through three focus areas:

Enable partners to do more with less through efficient management support services, delivered locally or as global shared services.

For example, UNOPS supports mine-action, humanitarian, stabilization and explosive management activities, as well as capacity-building activities for United Nations missions, and the weapons and ammunition management work of the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and partners in 17 countries and territories around the world. Totalling $250 million, UNOPS helped its main partner, UNMAS, deliver a range of results, including:

- In Darfur, more than 90,000 small arms ammunitions were destroyed and some 200,000 beneficiaries received mine-risk education.

- In Iraq, training was provided to local police on first responder activities and explosive ordnance/improvised explosive device (IED) disposal.
- In Mali, improvised explosive device awareness and threat mitigation, training-of-trainers and search and detection training were provided to infantry troops in their home countries. National trainers taught over 4,800 peacekeepers. Improvised explosive device awareness training was provided to 2,822 peacekeepers upon their arrival in the country.

Help people achieve individual, local, national and global objectives through effective specialized technical expertise grounded in international norms and standards.

For example, some 400,000 people in the north of Sri Lanka are now benefitting from an improved waste management system that helps ensure proper waste disposal while also protecting the environment and nearby communities. As part of the development contribution of the European Union to Sri Lanka, UNOPS implemented a rehabilitated drainage, wastewater and sewage management system in two districts. This project also included providing training to community members on the management and use of this new system. In 2017, 45 percent of UNOPS-supported projects reported measures to mitigate negative environmental effects.

Support countries in expanding the pool and effectiveness of resources available to achieve the 2030 Agenda. UNOPS is working to further partnerships between the public and private sectors. One way we do this is by partnering with private sector organizations whose resources and expertise can complement our work in countries and regions around the world.

For example, UNOPS is supporting the Government of Guatemala's sustainable development objectives through the procurement of medicines. In 2017, UNOPS helped the Government stock 124 hospitals and health centres across the country with more than 200 medicines for the social security institute. Through UNOPS transparent and efficient procurement processes, the institute estimated savings approaching $27 million, representing approximately a 50 percent reduction on initial cost estimates. This calculation was made by comparing the actual costs through the UNOPS approach with the previous costs of securing those services.

OUR PROJECTS

LIGHTING UP RURAL SIERRA LEONE

Following the Ebola Outbreak that struck large parts of West Africa in 2014, the Government of Sierra Leone launched the President's Recovery Priorities – a multi-stakeholder programme to strengthen the nation's infrastructure.

As part of this, Sierra Leone's Ministry of Energy launched the National Energy Policy and Action Plan – an initiative aimed at increasing access to energy across Sierra Leone and significantly boosting the country's energy generation.

One of the projects developed to support the Government's energy access objectives is the Rural Renewable Energy Project (RREP), implemented by UNOPS.

Funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the RREP started in 2016 and aims to harness energy from the sun to generate up to 5 megawatts of sustainable, low-carbon electricity for rural communities. This project is the first of its kind and scale in sub-Saharan Africa, and will benefit more than 360,000 residents, local businesses and essential services.

The first phase was completed in July 2017, which saw solar power installed at 54 community health centres across 12 districts of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leonean technicians were employed to install the sites, building local capacity through both classroom and in-the-field training.

A reliable source of electricity helps to ensure that vaccines can be properly stored and maintained. © UNOPS/Olivia Acland

Nurses at Conakry Dee Clinic visit nearby communities on a weekly basis to provide basic health services. © UNOPS/Olivia Acland

Seventeen percent of those trained and then employed in the installation works were women while 42 percent of the custodians of the solar systems at the Community Health Centres are women.

The second phase, which will be completed at the end of this year, will widen access to electricity to houses, schools and businesses in 50 rural villages, by expanding the existing health centre power stations and installing distribution networks to create 50 independent mini-grids.

In parallel with the infrastructure roll-out, a competitive selection process identified successful private sector companies who will assume responsibility for the long-term operations and maintenance of these mini-grid power networks in each village. This is providing important opportunities for employment in the local rural economy, to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.

Electricity meters will be fitted to those buildings who wish to receive electricity, to help ensure an accurate calculation of electricity used. Each connected building will also receive a basic package of lights and sockets.

During the final phase, a further 40 larger villages across Sierra Leone will have similar systems developed and installed, using $7.5 million of co-investment generated from the private sector. This phase, and the project as a whole, is set to be complete by the end of 2020.

By the end, UNOPS and its partners will have helped extend the country's energy capacity. The project will have created some hundreds of jobs across the country and an investment opportunity into an entirely new market of sustainable low-carbon solar-generated electricity, paving the way for further investment and similar projects in the region.

MOBILIZING THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SUPPORT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The SDGs set out to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030. To achieve these goals, the mobilization of trillions of dollars in new investments to support infrastructure and other development projects is required.

In an effort to mobilize private sector investments, UNOPS has partnered with mobile telecommunications operator, Ooredoo, who has invested $3.1 million to help combat high maternal and child mortality rates across Myanmar.

Through this, UNOPS is working with the Ministry of Health and Sports to design and construct 17 primary healthcare centres in rural and peri-urban communities throughout the country. These centres are being constructed in eight states and regions to serve community health needs, focusing especially on maternal, newborn and child health. They are expected to provide nearly 100,000 people with access to basic healthcare services.

The centres are built with sustainability in mind. The buildings are designed to resist natural hazards, such as earthquakes and wind loads, and they incorporate the use of renewable power sources and waste management technology to help reduce waste.

Midwife Thin Thin Htike has worked in Kan Tinn for the past 12 years. Before the new health centre opened, she provided basic healthcare services in a cramped building. “We did not have running water and only had one battery-powered lamp,” said Thin Thin Htike.

She continued: “The old health centre was not suitable for deliveries, so I helped women give birth in their own homes instead.”

During 2017, construction was completed on nine centres, with the remaining ones expected to be finished in 2018. The project is also helping improve livelihoods and local economies by creating jobs for local workers. In 2017, approximately 48,000 labour days were created for local workers, of which more than 6,000 days were created for women.

The Ooredoo-UNOPS partnership is one example of how the private sector can help a developing country achieve the SDGs. Investment in health infrastructure is helping accelerate Myanmar’s progress towards reducing maternal mortality, ending preventable deaths among newborns and children under five, and reducing the neonatal mortality rate.

A woman walks with a child outside a newly built healthcare centre in Kan Tinn. © UNOPS

Before the new healthcare centre opened in Kan Tinn, midwife Thin Thin Htike used to perform deliveries at home, rather than in a health centre. © UNOPS

The new healthcare centres are designed and constructed to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to care. © UNOPS

Equal signatory power on cash assistance contracts for both husbands and wives helps to ensure property rights for women. © UNOPS/Annesofie Norn

BEYOND INFRASTRUCTURE – REBUILDING HOMES WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Since the 2014 conflict in Gaza, more than 20,000 people remain displaced. Less than five percent of the population has access to safe drinking water, and the provision of basic services, including health and education, continues to decline. An urgent need to rebuild homes persists.

To provide relief to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, UNOPS is implementing a housing project that contributes to the sustainable reconstruction of totally destroyed housing in the territory.

Beneficiaries of this project are among the most vulnerable in society. Selected from internally displaced populations, they are all families who lost their home during the conflict. Particular attention is given to women and elderly headed-households, as well as people living with disabilities.

With funding from the Government of Germany, in close collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Public Works and Housing and in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council, a range of new homes have been individually designed according to the owner's wishes and needs.

Community groups were involved in the design of durable solutions for the homes, focusing on dedicated themes, such as incorporating the needs of women. UNOPS has verified that local building regulations have been applied and that they are designed according to local laws for earthquake resilience. In the case of residents who are disabled or have special needs, relevant measures have also been taken into consideration.

Far exceeding typical construction activities, a range of additional support is also provided to families, including legal, financial and technical support. For example, to increase the protection of women and children, cash grants for the house reconstruction are co-signed by both heads of the household, helping ensure property rights for women. Additionally, legal support is further extended to widowed or divorced women, to enable them to be legally recognized as owners of their homes.

In 2017, 140 houses were reconstructed as part of this project, creating 168,000 days of labour for local workers.

The Ministry of Public Works and Housing identified nearly 450 potential beneficiaries whose homes were destroyed in 2014. © UNOPS/Elise Laker

Following the escalation of conflict in 2014, families were forced to abandon their homes. Now, 140 families have successfully reconstructed their homes. © UNOPS/Annesofie Norn

MODERNIZING FAMILY FARMING ACROSS PARAGUAY

Many people in Paraguay spend much of their time outside, farming the land to feed and support their families.

Agriculture is central to Paraguay's economy. A large percentage of Paraguay's 6.7 million-strong population makes a living from agricultural work, especially in rural areas, often through subsistence farming. Agriculture also plays a significant role in the country's international trade. Along with livestock rearing and the production of hydroelectricity, agriculture represents more than 60 percent of all exports.

Research conducted by the Government of Paraguay found that family farming represented more than 90 percent of all agricultural operations, in a sector characterized by low productivity and limited access to land, capital and technology. Stagnant yields were attributed to erosion, the loss of fertility in the soil, biodiversity loss and concerns surrounding water use.

Mercedes Núñez understands the challenges all too well. Her family grew beans, peanuts and corn, and kept their own cows for milk. Sale of items usually earned the family around $180 a month. Unfortunately, they were only able to cultivate a quarter of the fertile land available to them. Financial restraints and limited human capacity prevented larger-scale agriculture.

Many farming families across Paraguay face similar problems.

The way people in Paraguay farm is being modernized to give agriculture a boost and support thousands of livelihoods. © UNOPS/Luis Vera

Living off the land, in more ways than one: Many people in Paraguay depend on agriculture for food and livelihoods. © UNOPS/Luis Vera

The winner of UNOPS Project of the Year Award for 2017

> Thanks to the technology we used, our production improved so both the crop yield and our family income increased.
>
> A local farmer

Recognizing this, the Government made it a priority to modernize the sector and support thousands of farmers across the country.

Since 2014, UNOPS has supported the Government to address these concerns through a key poverty reduction initiative: The modernization of family agriculture in the most impoverished areas. This involves a series of activities to support sustainable land cultivation, procuring agricultural supplies, conducting monitoring work and managing related projects.

So far, projects have helped rehabilitate over 40,000 hectares of agricultural land, strengthening the food security and livelihoods of nearly 120,000 people. In 2017, as part of these projects, more than 13,000 hectares of land were improved in around 150 rural villages.

"Due to the production growth, agricultural activities also increased. Everyone had to work. Women were included from the planning phase and their role has been very important throughout the project," said Zenen Samudio, farmer and President of the Coordinating Committee for Sovereignty, Lima, Paraguay.

The project helped Mercedes and her family to clean and prepare most of their previously unused fertile land for sweet potatoes. Produce sales could earn the family $2,180 – twelve times more than they were earning before.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR SERBIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

For many people around the world, a lack of economic opportunities often means leaving not only one's community, but one's country to search for work. But not for Erkan Hadžić.

Erkan is one of 22 grant recipients of a European PROGRES initiative to support youth entrepreneurship in the southern part of Serbia. Last year, he started his own corrugated paper and cardboard production company.

"This whole process – receiving the equipment and establishing a business – has enabled me to stay in my own town and develop my own business," said Erkan.

Across southern Serbia, the European PROGRES programme helped to build the foundation for the sustainable development of 34 of the most underserved local self-governments in the country.

The programme strengthened local governance, planning and management capacities; increased the competitiveness of local economies; encouraged social inclusion and improved access to employment; and communicated the effects of Serbia's accession into the European Union. Funded by the European Union and the Governments of Serbia and Switzerland, UNOPS implemented the programme in partnership with the Government of Serbia.

Encouraging entrepreneurship: Women across southern Serbia received skills training, materials or funds to help them start their own businesses. © UNOPS/Dario Marić

Making road signs and souvenirs became a source of income for people with disabilities in Raška, Serbia. © UNOPS/Samir Delić

The programme has improved the lives of more than 270,000 people, and indirectly benefitted nearly one million people – almost one-sixth of the Serbian population.

Dairy farm owner Milan Veličković is one of them. His family-run business in the small village of Alakince, located in south-eastern Serbia, has been producing milk and other dairy products for two decades. Through the European PROGRES programme, Milan received equipment to help his business become more efficient.

"The new equipment allowed us to increase the volume of goods we transported, which helped to reduce the price of products and saved us money," said Milan. "We then used the money we saved to create more jobs at the dairy."

Over the course of three years, the programme has contributed to attracting more than 10 million Euros worth of investments in economic and social projects. It has also led to the creation of nearly 100 new businesses and more than 700 new jobs.

The programme also worked towards improving the social and economic standing of more than 9,000 people from vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities such as the Roma, women and people with disabilities.

Roma participants received training that enhanced their employability or support for income generating activities, as well as improved living conditions in Roma homes. The programme also helped Roma children improve their knowledge of Serbian and mathematics, among other activities.

In partnership with UN Women, European PROGRES worked on strengthening the institutional framework for gender equality. Grants helped female participants gain enhanced knowledge of entrepreneurship, material for agricultural production or funds to start their own businesses.

To encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities into the labour market, grants were also used to help local organizations provide skills training.

"The funds enabled us to equip our workshop where people with disabilities can learn and, through work education, gain skills that will help them with employment," said Zlatan Vukosavljević, founder of the Association for Helping Persons with Special Needs in Raška Municipality. "They have the possibility to create something, to see the fruits of their labour."

OUR PEOPLE

We work hard to recruit and retain the best expertise. Our partners rely on our professionalism, skills, expertise and innovative ideas to successfully complete projects in some of the most challenging locations around the world.

As members of the UN family strive towards gender equality, UNOPS took an important step. We now break down our personnel data and turnover rate by gender. This helps enable us to better identify issues and take targeted steps to improve.

more than
2,100
people benefited from UNOPS learning opportunities

81%
of participants rated learning opportunities as 'extremely relevant' or 'very relevant' to their work

more than
600
people were supported through performance management training

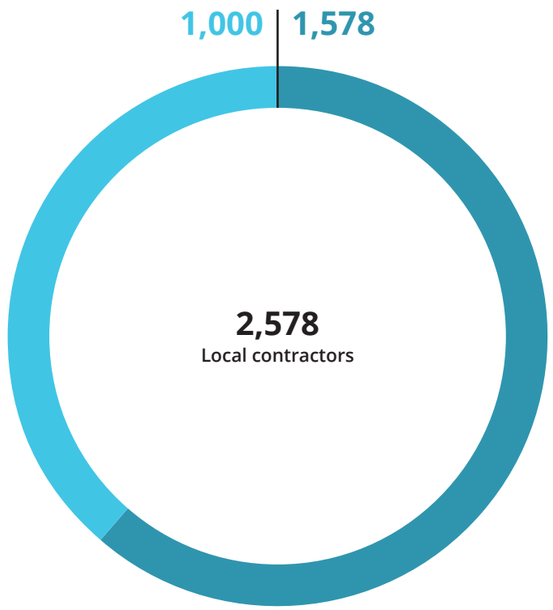
46%
of these participants were women

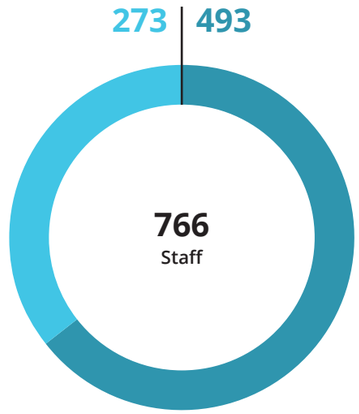
64
people obtained certifications from the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health

571
people received anti-corruption training

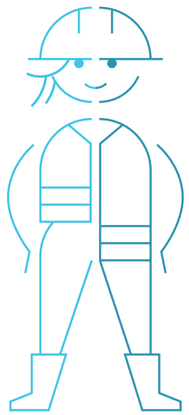
248
people received health and safety related training

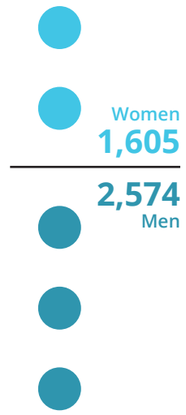
Gender breakdown of UNOPS personnel* as of 31 December 2017





Women Men





Total
4,179
All UNOPS personnel

*This breakdown refers to UNOPS personnel only. In addition, we also manage contracts on behalf of a range of partners. In total, more than 11,000 people are on UNOPS contracts.

THE TIME FOR WOMEN IS NOW

They build the infrastructure that helps make our communities climate resilient. They manage supply chains to deliver life-saving medicines to the remotest places on earth. They make up nearly half of our world's population … they are women.

Despite great strides in gender equality over the past decade, deep-seated prejudices and discrimination still exist and it holds us all back. Now more than ever people are pushing for an equal future.

Imelda Malingu Osodo is going over plans to improve maternal facilities in Turkana County in Kenya. © UNOPS/John Rae

> Achieving gender parity is non-negotiable.
>
> **Grete Faremo, UNOPS Executive Director**

We believe in this future.

It is one where women can realize their full potential. Where they can receive the same recognition as men. We want to see a world where women feel safe. Where they can access education and opportunities to strengthen their livelihoods. We want to see women, some of the main victims of conflict, included in the peace process.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right. Sustainable Development Goal 5 declares our common intent to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The gender challenge we have before us is about rights, opportunities and hard economic facts. People and countries that limit the opportunities of girls and women undermine their own growth potential.

For UNOPS, gender is inextricably linked with every aspect of our work. Around the world, we address a variety of challenges with a strong focus on women and girls. We advocate mainstreaming gender into every aspect of projects, if they are to create lasting impact.

For example, in Kenya, in partnership with UNICEF, we are renovating and building maternal health facilities throughout the country. As part of this project, we have also helped train over 5,000 Community Health Volunteers, most of whom are women, to go into communities and help women and girls to better access quality healthcare.

The site inspector in charge of an infrastructure project in Turkana County is an engineer from Kenya. Imelda Malingu Osodo was one of only eight women in a class of 40 men. Today, she is the only woman on site in Turkana, Kenya, overseeing the construction of facilities being built for women. This is not a unique situation.

Our operations around the world, in particular in conflict-affected countries, clearly show that women are under-represented. This must change – at UNOPS, within the broader UN system and globally. In 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres stressed the need to revitalize the way the UN works, with a pledge to improve gender parity system-wide.

In 2018, UNOPS embraced this challenge and launched a gender strategy that outlines our commitment to ensure women, at all levels, see a future for themselves at UNOPS. This means changing the way we do things – be it recruiting or developing policies that make women like Imelda continue to feel safe, respected and motivated to work towards our common goals. UNOPS will be an organization where gender representation in every kind of profession and at all levels is more balanced. In turn, that balance will be reflected in our projects and their impact. This is the only way we can truly serve the people who count on us.

Our organization-wide Gender Parity Strategy has three main goals:

- To meet the targets set by the Secretary-General's UN System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity
- To achieve the equal representation of men and women across our workforce, irrespective of levels, by 2020
- To increase the representation of women at senior and decision-making levels as per the criteria of the UN System-Wide Strategy while also applying them to those who work with us as consultants and contractors

We have set ambitious targets, but above all else, this strategy is driven by a simple principle: To do what is right and provide equal opportunities for women in all areas of our work.

TO SPUR DEVELOPMENT, LOOK CLOSER TO HOME

The importance of home-grown leadership in international development shouldn't be underestimated. Here's why.

By Worknesh Mekonnen Gonet

When it comes to development work, local nationals can bring a wealth of not only experience, but also knowledge about local cultures and contexts. But in the world of international development, is enough being done to recruit, retain and promote local nationals for leadership roles?

Often, local problems can benefit from local solutions, but international personnel bring varied experiences and perspectives that enrich our learning through the transfer of knowledge and skills. It's a balance and using international personnel doesn't mean we should overlook home-grown skills.

Where I work, at UNOPS Ethiopia, we strive to practice just that. Our office has more Ethiopian nationals than international personnel, and the country director is Ethiopian – me.

Each day, we aim to nurture our team. Why? Because it's good for both the skills development of everyone who works here, and for Ethiopia as a country. Our team is taking the skills learned from working with UNOPS to make a real impact in their own country.

In other words, by investing in local nationals, investments are also being made in the growth and prosperity of the country – and the region.

Ester oversees seawall construction in Tanzania to make sure that the quality of work remains high. © UNOPS/John Rae

CONTRIBUTING TO AFRICA'S SUCCESS

Talented workers – including local nationals – are attracted to (and stay with) organizations that offer opportunities to grow as leaders. That's why we encourage professional skills development and provide exposure to role models who can nurture both technical and soft skills.

A recent UNOPS-implemented solar panel installation project is a good example of this. We recruited seven Ethiopian engineers, six men and one woman, to install solar panels on 166 health centres.

This process of identifying, recruiting and training local workers is helping Ethiopian engineers to contribute even more to the country's economic development. They can now be called upon to contribute to current and future projects.

THE POWER OF HOME-GROWN LEADERSHIP

When I was growing up, I saw few examples of Ethiopians leading international organizations within my country. Now, I hope to be a role model for others who want to pursue a similar career – while also helping to positively shift traditional mindsets.

Often, entrenched cultural practices and the modern complexities of work-life balance squash the ambitions of professional women. We can help to tackle these barriers by encouraging flexible hours and networking to help personnel develop the ties, visibility and organizational knowledge essential for professional and personal success. We also take measures to attract women in key leadership positions, including in programme, finance and procurement positions – key roles generally dominated by men.

LOCAL TALENT, INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Extreme localization is not good for an organization – it leaves no room for the development of well-rounded leaders. That's why I encourage my team to understand the different cultural environments in which UNOPS operates.

The lifeline of a sustainable organization is a workforce that is locally rooted and globally nurtured. And that's exactly what we encourage – for the benefit of those who work with us, the countries we work in and our partners.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Worknesh Mekonnen Gonet is the Country Director for UNOPS Ethiopia, which also provides oversight for UNOPS work in Sudan and Djibouti, and Representative to the African Union. She has more than 20 years of experience in the development sector, mostly with international non-governmental organizations, including Save the Children, World Vision and ActionAid International.

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT: CAN HEALTH CENTRES BE POWER STATIONS?

Renewable energy has long been heralded as the solution for providing hard-to-reach communities with electricity. But how can we ensure that it's sustainable?

By Nick Gardner

A better learning environment: Solar power provides electricity for this school in Sierra Leone – day and night. © UNOPS/Olivia Acland

In Sierra Leone, just 13 percent of the country has access to electricity. In rural areas, that number drops to one percent.

From buying batteries for flashlights to kerosene for lamps to fuel for shared generators, or paying someone else to charge a mobile phone, people in rural areas are already spending up to nine percent of their monthly income on power. Village residents are hungry for what limited power exists – and they're prepared to sacrifice a considerable portion of their limited income to get it.

Renewable energy sources like solar energy have long been seen as the best way to address issues surrounding accessing electricity. But Sierra Leone's countryside is littered with examples of solar power installations that are no longer functioning – or never functioned properly in the first place.

Solar power is not the simple and quick solution it is often portrayed to be. Designing the most appropriate solar solution for each local area is incredibly complex. But with the right approach, solar power could be a real game changer in encouraging sustainable development through energy access – driving improvements in health services, education and economic activity.

So how to increase access to electricity for the most underserved areas of the country in a sustainable way?

It may be a context specific question, but in Sierra Leone, with the Government and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, we are building solar-powered mini-grids, centred on community health centres, and operated as commercial enterprises, to supply entire villages with electricity.

LIGHTING UP RURAL SIERRA LEONE

In rural areas of the country, health centres and a steady flow of electricity are desperately needed.

Difficulty accessing health services – and the difficulties local health centres face providing round-the-clock care without access to a steady source of electricity – contributes to Sierra Leone being a dangerous place to give birth. Expectant mothers have a 1 in 17 chance of dying in childbirth – one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

In a country where many births occur at night, midwives in many rural communities rely on flashlights or mobile phones to aid deliveries. If something goes wrong, they have little access to the facilities they need to save mothers' lives.

Using renewable solar energy to power the health centres means electricity for the tools needed to perform emergency procedures and full lighting for midwives to work. It means electricity for the refrigerators needed to store blood for transfusions or the vaccines needed to prevent diseases.

DRIVING DEVELOPMENT

However, installing a few solar panels on public buildings, and bringing a few light bulbs, the occasional water pump or solar fridge doesn't ensure long-term sustainability. That requires working with the private sector.

Using the health-centres-as-a-power-station approach, private operators take responsibility for the long-term operations and maintenance of the mini-grid systems. The health centres receive free electricity in return for the land on which to build the power station for the whole village. And using mini-grid distribution systems to provide power to the whole village will bring down the cost, enabling consumers to save money – or use more power for other activities for the same cost.

Once fully operational, mini-grids in smaller villages provide immediate income generating opportunities. Private sector operators can go beyond simply providing power. From selling mobile phone top-ups or providing phone banking services, to selling internet access or providing micro-financing for domestic appliances – the possibilities are endless.

And making it attractive for the private sector to operate solar power installations encourages continued investment in the energy sector in rural areas, creating a truly sustainable solution.

Although initially aimed at smaller villages, the next phase of this project will encourage private sector operators to co-invest to develop similar mini-grid systems for larger villages. This will eventually create an environment where the private sector is pushing forward the development of mini-grids without the need for donor support.

Sierra Leone will become a model for maximizing sustainable energy access in rural areas – and will show how partnering with the private sector to address development needs can have far-ranging benefits.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Gardner is UNOPS Sierra Leone Country Manager and Project Manager for the country's Rural Renewable Energy Project. A Chartered Civil Engineer, he joined UNOPS in 2009 after more than 20 years in the private sector. He previously worked for UNOPS in South Sudan, Copenhagen and Jerusalem.

OUR PARTNERS

UNOPS is dedicated to supporting its partners by providing services that increase the effectiveness of peace and security, humanitarian and development projects worldwide.

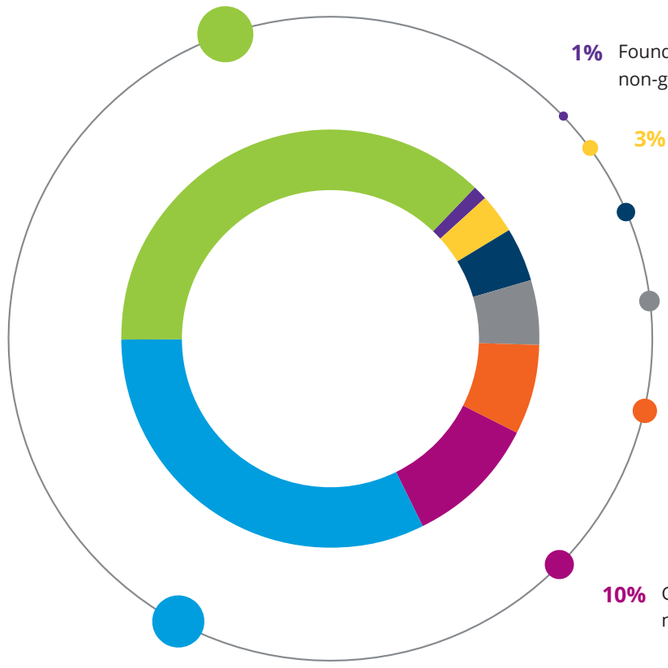
To advance the 2030 Agenda and support the achievement of the SDGs, we aim to engage in collaborative partnerships with a focus on sharing our expertise in infrastructure, project management, procurement, human resources and financial services.

Our partners choose to work with us to complement or expand their own capacities, reduce risks, bring an impartial and trusted advisor, and improve efficiency, speed, quality and/or cost-effectiveness.

UNOPS is highly motivated to meet the expectations of its partners, and as a service provider, our partners' priorities and needs dictate the scope, focus and location of our work. Whether building on current partnerships or creating trust in new ones, UNOPS aims to ensure that mutual understanding and the pursuit of common goals underscore all of our relationships.

UNOPS support to governments reached a record high in 2017, representing over one-third of our portfolio for the year and indicating a clear demand for our services. Government partners included Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Japan, Peru, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Within the UN family, which represented just under one-third of our portfolio, our largest partner was the UN Secretariat. We provided a range of services to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support.



In Tanzania, building seawalls helps prevent seawater from flooding the patch of beach where people like Chesko work. © UNOPS/John Rae

ADVANCING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

This year, as part of our contributions to the SDGs, we are highlighting details of our projects that showcase our implementation capacity.

In helping our partners respond to the challenges faced by their communities, we put to use world-class knowledge, using problem-solving approaches that are based on local needs and suited to local conditions.

In Saint Lucia, UNOPS is working to improve local water conditions for some 10,000 residents in Dennery, in the north of the country. We constructed a water treatment plant in 2017, while simultaneously conducting training activities for local officials to help ensure the long-term sustainable management of this upgraded water network. An example of South-South Cooperation, with funding for this project coming from the Government of Mexico, the new treatment plant will have a capacity of 1.8 million litres of water per day. It is now enabling access to clean water for whole communities in Dennery, including children who didn't have access to clean water at some schools.

As we work towards Agenda 2030, UNOPS supports innovative solutions wherever possible. On behalf of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, UNOPS recently established a science and innovation centre in Antigua, which aims to focus on identifying and developing new ways to address the challenges the country faces due to climate change. This small island developing state is the first in the Caribbean to launch a dedicated facility that encourages local entrepreneurship and provides a space for students and young thinkers in the areas of clean technology and climate change.

In Tanzania, we are supporting the Government to help counter the negative effects of climate change and rising sea levels. In partnership with UN Environment, in a project funded by the Adaptation Fund and Global Environment Facility, UNOPS constructed and rehabilitated 2,400 metres of sea defence walls in seven sites along the country's coast. This provides resilience for those living and working in these coastal areas, to help enable them to continue farming and engaging in income-generating activities. Solar street lights are also being installed along the walls, which helps to increase safety and security for those walking along these areas at night.

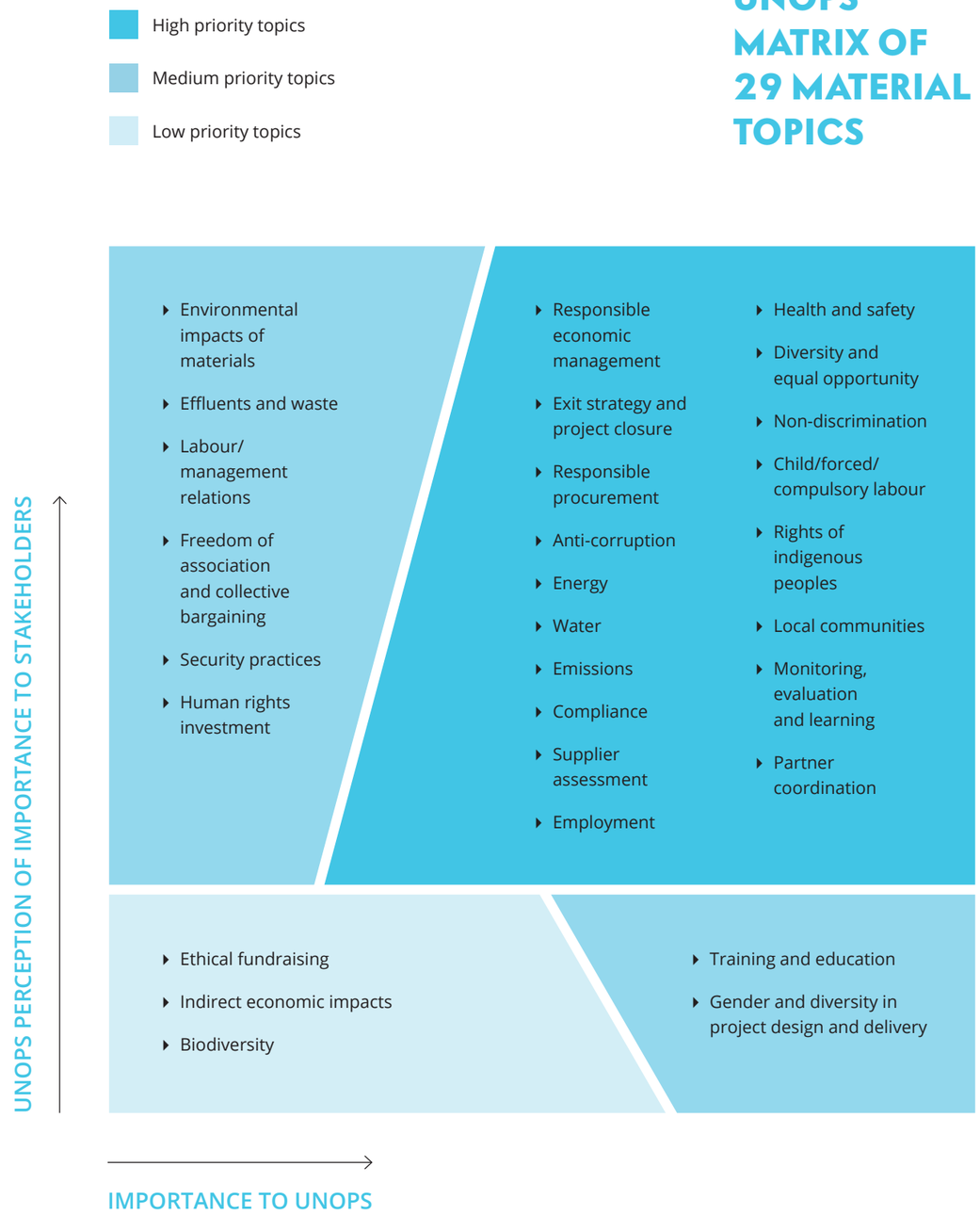
SUSTAINABILITY AT UNOPS

The GRI framework measures the impact of UNOPS work on the environment and the societies in which we work, underscoring how our operations contribute to sustainable development around the world.

Through GRI, we speak a common reporting language to both those inside and outside of the United Nations. Here we reaffirm our commitment to measuring ourselves against international standards.

Full details of how we assess our work against GRI standards, including all relevant topics, indicators and datasets, are available in the GRI index, which accompanies this report.

UNOPS MATRIX OF 29 MATERIAL TOPICS



"We made great savings with the implementation of the new procurement systems through the United Nations and UNOPS, and this is a breakthrough in the prevention of corruption that never existed before."

Juan Orlando Hernández, President, Honduras

"Over the last decade, UNOPS has supported us in close to a billion dollars' worth of projects to deliver access to basic services and provide opportunities to the bottom 40 percent of the population in the developing world. They are one of the World Bank's most important UN partners, including in fragile states. I am confident we can grow our partnership further to achieve better results for the SDGs."

Kristalina Georgieva, Chief Executive Officer, World Bank

"UN Environment has broad scientific and policy experience, and UNOPS has rich expertise in infrastructure and project management. Bringing them together creates a unique alliance, which wields a force for global change that far outstrips the sum of its parts."

Erik Solheim, Executive Director, UN Environment

HOW WE CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

"Thanks to the opening of the new UNOPS office, Ukraine will be able to better access innovative sources of funding through interactions with institutional donors, charity organizations, as well as international business associations."

Petro Poroshenko, President, Ukraine

OUR COMMON WORLD

UNOPS provides meaningful technical expertise to countries in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In countries such as Yemen, Iraq, Somalia and Colombia, UNOPS technical support to UN agencies in procurement and other specialized areas has expedited the provision of relief services to millions of people in need, and in doing so, contributed to more stable and secure societies.

António Guterres, Secretary-General, UN

"We are happy to be working in cooperation with UNOPS and DFID on a project that is providing renewable energy to improve the lives and livelihoods of our compatriots in our rural areas across the country; to ensure better health outcomes, to enhance education and to stimulate the growth of local economies."

Ernest Bai Koroma, former President, Sierra Leone

SOLUTIONS WE HELP PROVIDE

"We are proud to have received the distinction of the UN for achieving excellence in project management, quality, innovation and impact of results for the 'Programme on Modernizing Family Farming.' This programme benefited more than 30,000 families throughout the country in just four years, changing the lives of thousands of people and bringing development to the countryside."

Horacio Cartes, President, Paraguay

Speaking about the UNOPS-implemented Iraq Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Information Centre, one of the largest UN inter-agency collective accountability projects of its kind:

"Connecting displaced people with humanitarian organizations is of vital importance, especially during a crisis. The Iraq IDP Call Centre does that simply and to great effect."

Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR

"I am well aware of the important role UNOPS plays to support the transparency, relevance and effectiveness of highly complex projects in different neighbouring countries. I am pleased that the municipality and the Ministry of Transport and Public Works are relying on UNOPS to implement the tramway project."

Lenín Moreno, President, Ecuador

OUR COMMON WORLD

We are a member of the GOLD Community and support the mission of GRI to empower decision makers everywhere, through GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards and its multi-stakeholder network, to take action towards a more sustainable economy and world.

GOLD Community
United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
2018

YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US!

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For more information: www.unops.org.

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CERTIFICATIONS

We measure our work against international best practices.
We hold certifications in and comply with the following standards.

ENVIRONMENT

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

HEALTH & SAFETY

PROCUREMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE

QUALITY MANAGEMENT

TRANSPARENCY

SUSTAINABILITY

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